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FROM: Belgrade

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 591, October 24, 6 p.m.

PRIORITY

ACTION DEPARTMENT 591, INFORMATION SARAJEVO, ZAGREB UNNUMBERED.

Yugoslavian reaction Cuba quarantine has continued today to be relatively sober, (#)

US although extensive press commentary shows little sympathy for US motives and actions. Only incident up to this point has been painting USIS/Zagreb reading room window reported Zagreb's telegram 234 to Department. Degree of responsibility with which Yugoslavian Government and press have treated quarantine up to now suggests that Zagreb incident may have been work of foreign students (reportedly several Cuban youths studying there) rather than regime-inspired.

In several meetings Embassy officers have had with Yugoslavian officials and private persons same tone of sobriety and total absence emotional reaction have been noted. A few expressed concern that unless Cuban affair some how brought to quick settlement general war may become unavoidable; this apprehension reinforced by (1) their stated realization that US determined carry out announced measures, (2) lack of knowledge how governments will respond, with at least possibility too they think, that Khrushchev may feel himself so committed as to make retreat difficult if not impossible; and note taken by some of them that President Kennedy characterized current quarantine measures as merely "initial". Up to now, atmosphere in Belgrade has remained calm, and concern over future development this crisis is no more than sense of uneasiness expressed by a few Yugoslavian contacts.

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-2- 591, October 24, 6 p.m. from Belgrade

Yugoslavian press today devoted many pages to quarantine. Reporting has been on the whole factual and objective, but with occasional bias against US position. For example, each mention of missile installations Cuba prefaced by "alleged"; selections published from foreign press restricted to excerpts that oppose US decision.

Editorial comments today characterized quarantine as "unilateral aggressive offensive action, which violates principle of UN charter that gives each country 'right to independence and defense'". Yugoslavian press stated that "to embark consciously upon road of hazards in labyrinth of present-day international relations is not sign courage, and least of all of wisdom". Argued that UN charter explicitly forbids use of force against territorial integrity or political independence any country. Asked rhetorically "are not other great and small powers, those aligned with blocs and those which are not, exposed to possible attacks from NATO rocket bases"? POLITIKA implies that quarantine directed more against Castro ideology than against Soviet military threat by lecturing that "quarantine is not and cannot be protection against 'disease' of political and economic Emancipation Latin America which is spreading everywhere regardless of interests and desires of bloc powers". Both papers plead that urgent action in UN necessary to avert wider conflict "which would be fatal to mankind. Situation calls for extreme calmness, prudence, and utmost sense of responsibility".

In connection UN Day observance Belgrade, Tito commented that "Present strained situation in connection with Cuba is cause for grave concern because it contains extremely dangerous implications. Measures that have already been taken and possible additional unilateral actions could bring world peace into danger. Way out can be found only by seeking peaceful solution and not relying on force. UN offers most suitable and only way to find appropriate settlement". VP Yugoslavian Parliament

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-3- 591, October 24, 6 p.m. from Belgrade

Parliament Simic, on same occasion, said "Instead of one-sided action now being undertaken against Cuba, international understanding based on principles of and with UN is indispensable".

Several social meetings with bloc diplomatic personnel Belgrade occurred today quietly in unstrained atmosphere. These bloc diplomats appeared personally friendly enough, although offering no significant comment except that of Soviet assistant Military Attache reported separately.

KOCHER

TRT/3

(#) Omission, correction to follow.

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